

MEDIA ADVISORY

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

June 14, 2006

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USDA RURAL DEVELOPMENT AND COMMONWEALTH NATIONAL BANK DELIVER \$3.7 MILLION TO NATURE'S CLASSROOM

Amherst, MA –USDA Rural Development State Director David Tuttle will travel to Charlton, MA with officers of Commonwealth National Bank on Thursday, June 15, 2006 to deliver \$3.7 million in USDA guaranteed loan funds for Nature's Classroom.

The \$3.7 million loan, provided by Commonwealth National Bank and backed by a USDA Rural Development Guarantee, will finance the construction of an Environmental Education Center on Nature's Classrooms' property. The *Hill Top Conference Center* will consist of three buildings: a 9,661 square foot conference and lodging center, a 4,720 square foot lodging facility, and an 8,925 square foot lodging and meeting facility.

Nature's Classroom, a residential environmental education program, provides a unique educational experience for students and their teachers, offering students an opportunity to take an active role in their education by participating in exciting, hands-on interdisciplinary classes. Nature's Classroom works closely with school teachers to create a learning partnership that lasts a lifetime.

USDA Rural Development's mission is to deliver programs in a way that will support increasing economic opportunity and improve the quality of life for all rural Americans. USDA Rural Development provides equity and technical assistance to finance and foster growth in homeownership, business development, and critical community and technology infrastructure. In Fiscal Year 2005, USDA Rural Development provided over \$58.5 million in assistance to Massachusetts' rural communities and families.

PHOTO/VIDEO/INTERVIEW OPPORTUNITY

WHO: USDA Rural Development State Director, David Tuttle

State Representative Mark Caron (tentative)

Dr. John G. Santos, Director of Nature's Classroom

Mary T. Dean, Commonwealth National Bank

WHAT: Presentation of federal funds

WHERE: Nature's Classroom - 19 Harrington Road, Charlton, MA

WHEN: Thursday, June 15, 2006. 12:00 Noon

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To file a complaint of discrimination write USDA, Director, Office of Civil Rights, 1400 Independence Avenue, S.W., Washington, DC 20250-9410 or call (800)795-3272 (voice) or (202) 720-6382 (TDD).